

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY
CINCPACFLT PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 308161

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FOR DRAFTING INFORMATION)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MU, US

SUBJECT: MASIRAH: PRESS GUIDANCE ON U.S. USE

REF: LONDON 19234

1. FOR LONDON: PLEASE TELL FCO THAT WE APPRECIATE THEIR COOPERATION AND ADVICE ON PROPOSED GUIDANCE, HAVE FURTHER REVISED IT IN ORDER TO MEET FCO CONCERNS INSOFAR AS POSSIBLE AND WILL TRY TO AVOID MENTIONING P-3'S SPECIFICALLY IN DEFERENCE TO FCO WISHES. IF PRESSED, HOWEVER, WE WILL HAVE TO IDENTIFY AIRCRAFT, AS THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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POINT APPEARED IN GUIDANCE ALREADY USED (AND PRINTED IN INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN" LAST AUGUST, ALTHOUGH NOT, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, ELSEWHERE). YOU MIGHT POINT OUT TO FCO THAT, IN OUR VIEW, THE GUIDANCE USED UP TO NOW HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE IN MINIMIZING PUBLICITY. WE TRUST THAT OUR HAVING DROPPED PHRASE "USE FACILITIES FOR REFUELING AT THE BRITISH AIR FIELD ON MASIRAH" WILL HELP MINIMIZE IN EYES OF PUBLIC DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN BRITISH PRESENCE AND OUR ARRANGEMENTS WITH OMANGOV.

2. FOR MUSCAT: PLEASE APPROACH FOREIGN MINISTER ZAWAMI AT EARLIEST APPROPRIATE MOMENT TO ADVISE HIM ON GUIDANCE WE WOULD USE IF AND ONLY IF FURTHER PRESS ENQUIRIES ARISE.

EXPLAIN THAT IN LIGHT OF HIS DISCUSSION WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY AT HERTON IN NEW YORK LAST OCTOBER WE WANT TO CONSULT FULLY WITH OMAN GOVERNMENT ON HANDLING ANY PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF OUR VISITS TO MASIRAH AND THAT SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OF GUIDANCE ATTEMPTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT LANGUAGE WHICH WE UNDERSTAND OMANIS HAVE USED PUBLICLY. ADVISE FOREIGN MINISTER'S REACTION.

3. BEGIN GUIDANCE. QUOTE:

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES PLANNING TO OPEN A BASE ON THE OMANI ISLAND OF MASIRAH?

A. YOU WILL NOTE THAT THE OMANI MINISTRY OF INFORMATION HAS CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT ANY STATE HAS BEEN, OR WILL BE, ALLOWED TO USE MASIRAH AS A MILITARY BASE. TO THAT WE WOULD ADD THAT THERE ARE NO U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL OR U.S. FACILITIES ON MASIRAH. WE UNDERSTAND THE OMANI GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON THE CLOSURE OF THE RAF STAGING POST NO LATER THAN NEXT MARCH. THERE HAS BEEN NO CONSIDERATION OF ESTABLISHING A U.S. MILITARY "BASE" ON THE ISLAND.
CONFIDENTIAL

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4. Q. DID THE SULTAN NOT SAY IN AN INTERVIEW TO LE MONDE THAT HE IS PREPARED TO ALLOW THE UNITED STATES TO USE MILITARY FACILITIES ON MASIRAH?

A. YOU WILL HAVE TO ASK THE OMANIS FOR CLARIFICATION OF WHAT THE SULTAN MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT HAVE SAID. I CAN CONFIRM, HOWEVER, THAT THE OMAN GOVERNMENT HAS PERMITTED PLANES TO VISIT THE ISLAND OCCASIONALLY IN RECENT MONTHS FOR REFUELING PURPOSES. (IF PRESSED ON THE TYPE OF PLANES, THE SPOKESMAN WILL SAY: "THEY WERE P-3 ORIONS. THESE ARE MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT.")

5. Q. COULD AN AMERICAN BASE BE DEVELOPED, ONCE THE BRITISH LEAVE, SINCE THE SULTAN SAYS HE IS NOW WILLING TO LET THE UNITED STATES USE THE FACILITIES?

A. THAT GETS INTO DECISIONS THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION WOULD HAVE TO MAKE, WHICH OF COURSE WE ARE UNABLE TO PREDICT. ALL I CAN DO IS REPEAT WHAT I HAVE ALREADY SAID: THERE HAS BEEN NO CONSIDERATION OF ESTABLISHING A "U.S. MILITARY BASE" ON MASIRAH. WE HAVE NO PERSONNEL OR FACILITIES THERE.

6. Q. WHAT ARE THE FREQUENCY OF THE REFUELING STOPS AT

MASIRAH? WHERE DO THE FLIGHTS ORIGINATE? WHERE DO
THEY GO? WHAT ARE THEIR PURPOSES?

A. THAT GETS INTO OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS I AM NOT
PREPARED TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL. ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT
THESE ARE OCCASIONAL FLIGHTS. UNQUOTE.
KISSINGER

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